

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

INSIDE
TRACKS

The Newsletter of Region One

Volume 13, Number 1

Spring 2003

Report on the Northwest Montana Elk Hunter Survey

What do elk hunters in north-west Montana think of current elk hunting regulations?



MATURE BULL ELK are highly valued and sought after by Region One elk hunters. Brow-tined only regulations have been in place for 4 years, and many believe it's too early to tell what effect they've had on the elk herd.

A recently completed survey found a range of opinions not only about the current brow-tined bull

'FWP's Region One Citizen Advisory Committee designed the survey in an effort to increase communication and feedback between FWP and hunters in the region.'

regulations, but also on other issues ranging from the youth elk hunting opportunity to predators and restrictions on land access.

The survey revealed that 43 percent of elk hunters in the region are satisfied with the current brow-tined bull hunting regulation, while 31 percent are dissatisfied. The remainder was neutral (23 percent) or didn't indicate an answer. The figures show that while more elk hunters are satisfied than dissatisfied, there is still

significant variation in preference when it comes to bull elk hunting regulations.

When asked about their preferred antlered bull season type, about equal numbers chose brow-tined bull only (33%) and any antlered bull (31%), while others chose a combination or special permit only.

The satisfaction was a bit higher (47%) with the current antlerless elk regulations that include permits for antlerless elk. But when asked their preferred antlerless elk season type, 36 percent of respondents indicated a desire for a general season opportunity for a portion of the season. This *(Continued on Page 2)*

'Inside Tracks' by Mail

If you would like to continue receiving *Inside Tracks* by mail, please fill out and mail this coupon to: FWP, Inside Tracks, 490 North Meridian Road, Kalispell, MT 59901.

STATE DOCUMENTS COLLECTION

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip code _____

MONTANA STATE LIBRARY
1515 F. CHAVE
HELENA, MONTANA 59601

MAY 20 2003

(If you do not mail this coupon,
this will be the last issue you receive by mail)

IN THIS ISSUE

- SPECIAL ELK ISSUE
- ELK SURVEY DATA
- NEW WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST WILL MANAGE MIDDLE FORK, NORTH FORK, SWAN
- FWP SETS HUNTING REGULATIONS
- WARDEN JIM ROBERTS MARKS 20 YEARS
- HUNTER EDUCATION INSTRUCTORS RECEIVE AWARDS

FREE COPY
PLEASE HELP YOURSELF



Elk Survey Data

(Continued from Page 1)

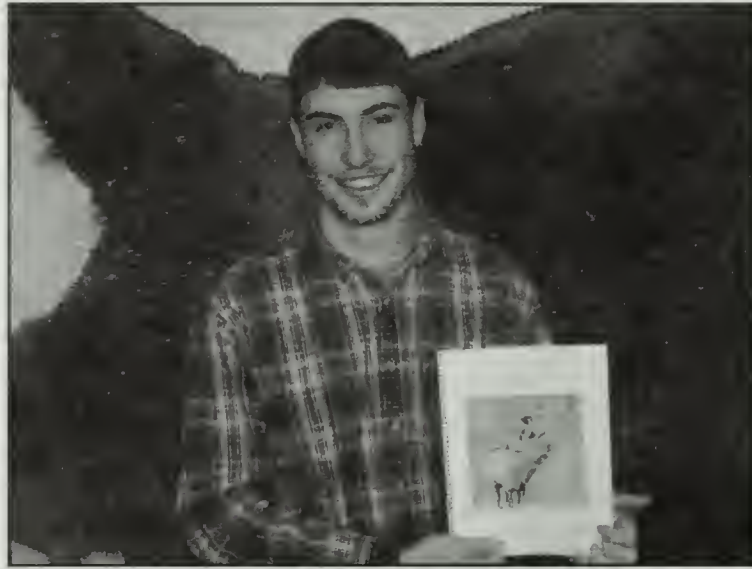
figure was slightly higher than the proportion of hunters (35%) who preferred antlerless elk hunting by permit only.

FWP's Region One Citizen Advisory Committee designed the survey in an effort to increase communication and feedback between FWP and hunters in the region. The survey will also provide important information on hunter attitudes as FWP revises its statewide elk management plan. According to FWP Wildlife Biologist Bruce Sterling, the results will provide information to managers as they consider different elk hunting season types.

In addition to answering the questions posed in the survey, about 200 of the hunters added written comments on a host of topics. Many respondents (33) expressed a desire to get any elk, which is similar to results from surveys in the mid-1980s. Many of these folks were older, had more difficulty hunting, or thought it would take the hunting pressure off the larger bulls. Others (32) reinforced the respondents' approval of the current brow-tined bull regulations. Thirty respondents sought a change from brow-tined to branch-antlered, noting that it was difficult to make out the brow tines in thick cover. Some respondents (28) favored a one day or more portion of the season where antlerless elk would be legal. Some respondents (16) commented on the youth elk hunting opportunity (12-14 year-olds can har-

vest an antlerless elk in certain districts), expressing the opinion that it was a bad idea.

For more information: This survey was completed in a partnership with Flathead Valley Community College. **Kevin Arnold**, a work-study student in Wildlife Biology, analyzed the returned surveys and wrote a detailed final report that summarizes the results. This report is available by calling FWP at 752-5501.



WIN-WIN PARTNERSHIP: Flathead Valley Community College wildlife student Kevin Arnold gained experience in analyzing social data important in wildlife management. FWP benefited by gaining a thorough, unbiased analysis of the survey data.

Arnold completed a 50-page report summarizing the results of the survey. This experience will serve him well as he builds credentials for a career in wildlife management.

Thanks to State Farm Insurance and Flathead Electric Coop

The Hunter Education Program received generous help from **Flathead Electric Coop's Roundup for Safety** program. A grant from the program allowed purchase of orange hunter safety vests for all graduates of the Hunter Education Program in the area FEC serves. **Thank you FEC!**

The State Farm Insurance agents of Flathead, Lincoln, and Lake counties have contributed hunter orange/camo caps for Hunter Education graduates. Everyone involved in the Hunter Education Program expresses gratitude to State Farm for this great donation. **Thanks State Farm!**

About the Survey

Dates of the Survey: The survey was conducted over the spring and summer of 2002.

Scope of the Survey: A total of 3,000 elk hunters in Region One (northwest Montana) were randomly selected to receive the survey by mail. The survey was included in a newsletter that presented information on northwest Montana elk populations and management.

Percentage Return: 391 usable surveys were returned. This amounts to a 13 percent return rate.

County of Respondents: Respondents hailed from the following counties: Flathead (37%), Lincoln (23%), Sanders (12%), Lake (11%), not indicated or other (17%).

Firearm/Archery Hunters: Hunters were asked to indicate their *primary* hunting type. Most (83%) respondents are primarily firearm hunters; 10% are archery hunters; 7% of the respondents marked both or did not answer.

New Wildlife Biologist Will Manage Middle Fork, South Fork, Swan

Tom Litchfield moved to Region One last December as Wildlife Biologist for the Middle and South Fork Flathead, and Swan River drainages. Litchfield will manage deer, elk, black bear, furbearers, and other vertebrates in this wildlife-rich area.

Litchfield received his B.S. in Wildlife Biology at the University of Vermont, and his M.S. in Wildlife Biology at the University of Georgia. He has extensive experience in working with white-tailed deer as a biologist in Georgia. He also worked as a biologist in Utah for five and a half years. He served as FWP's Wildlife Biologist in White Sulphur Springs for five years before coming to northwest Montana.

In his spare time, Litchfield is an avid (some might say picky) hunter of mature white-tailed bucks. He spent 72 hours last November stand-hunt-

ing northwest of Kalispell. He observed 23 white-tailed bucks, but did not choose to harvest one.

If you would like to discuss wildlife management with Tom, call him at 752-5501. 📞

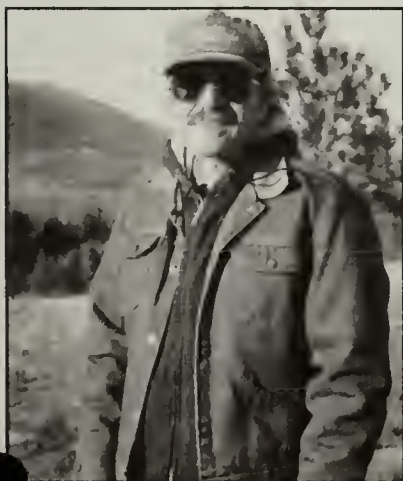


CHECKING OUT THE TERRITORY. Tom Litchfield wants your input on wildlife management in his district.

FWP Sets Hunting Regulations

The Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission is a 5-member Board appointed by the Governor that sets hunting, trapping, and fishing regulations, approves policies, and approves land purchases for FWP. The members serve without pay. Mike Murphy is the representative for northwest Montana. The FWP Commission is the liaison between the public and FWP.

Recently, the Commission adopted 2003 hunting regulations for deer, elk, and other species. Copies of the regulations are available at all fishing/hunting license providers and FWP offices. Commissioners listen to comments from the public and from FWP, and then make decisions on the regulations.



REPRESENTING NORTHWEST MONTANA is FWP Commission member Mike Murphy of Wolf Creek

Your opportunity to participate in the season setting process is ample. Typically, deer/elk/antelope public meetings begin in December and end in February. Furbearer seasons and moose/sheep/goat/mountain lion quotas and seasons are set at meetings during the spring. Fish regulations are set on a separate schedule. Contact the FWP office at Kalispell for more details on how you can get involved.

Results from the northwest Montana elk hunter survey have been sent to Mike Murphy for his reference. Mike is always happy to hear from hunters about their views; call him at 406-235-4512.

Warden Jim Roberts Marks 20 Years

This year, FWP Game Warden Jim Roberts marks 20 years of enforcing game laws in the Eureka district. Roberts is one of the most highly respected game wardens in Montana, known for his judgment, dedication, and intimate knowledge of his district. He has concentrated his career on serving the hunters, anglers, trappers, and other recreationists in the Eureka area. 📞



FWP GAME WARDEN Jim Roberts has served the sportsmen and women of the Eureka district in northwest Montana for 20 years.

Hunter Education Instructors Receive Awards

Northwest Montana Hunter and Bowhunter Education Instructors received their 5-25 year service award plaques at a recent instructors' workshop in Kalispell. Instructors at the 10-year level received engraved knives, and 15 and 25-year winners received additional awards or gift certificates. Award winners included:

Bowhunter: 5-year: Thomas Harris, Wes Plummer; 10-year: Ben Rossetto; 15-year: Jim Nesladek, Frank Noles.

Hunter: 5-year: Brian Schmaus, Andy Breland, David Evans, Brooke Harriman, Michael Howe, Dwyght Lindberg, Gene Miller, George Minturn, April Moser, Hansen Paskell, Wes Plummer, Jerry Shively, Kenneth Strowbridge, Emery Tegelberg, Daniel Toelke, Danielle White, R. Steve White, Chans Wyant; 10-year: Linda Cranney, Monty Long; 15-year: Ronald Smith; 25-year: James Mershon, Milton Loros.

In addition, 13 on-the-spot awards were given to instructors attending

the workshop who were nominated by their lead instructor for doing outstanding work in the past year. Award recipients included: Danny Place, Jim Willman, Roger Smith, Penny Fish, Ray Garth, Larry Rattray, Joe Ricke, Joseph Rocheleau, Timber Stevens,

Harlen Johnson, John Burgess, Roger Allick, and Lee Ressler. These folks each received either a Gerber mini-knife, or a compact game saw.

A highlight at the workshop was the recognition of the Larsson family instructors. Robert Larsson, Andy

Larsson, and Danny Larsson of St. Ignatius, represent three generations of Hunter Education Instructors. They have 60 years of Instructor service among them.



THREE GENERATIONS of Hunter Education Instructors. Left to right are Andy, Danny, and Bob Larsson. Bob began teaching in 1957!

INSIDE TRACKS is published by Region One



**Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks**

Dan Vincent, Supervisor
Jim Williams, Wildlife Manager
Jim Vashro, Fisheries Manager
Marty Watkins, Parks Manager
Ed Kelly, Warden Captain
Noemí Barta, Office Manager
Brian Marotz, Fisheries Mitigation Coordinator
Alan Wood, Wildlife Mitigation Coordinator
John Fraley, Information Officer, Newsletter Editor
FWP Director, Jeff Hagener

**FOR A FREE
SUBSCRIPTION
WRITE OR CALL:**

INSIDE TRACKS
490 N. MERIDIAN ROAD
KALISPELL, MT 59901-3854
406-752-5501

INSIDE TRACKS
490 N. MERIDIAN ROAD
KALISPELL, MT 59901-3854

BULK RATE
POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT NO. 93
KALISPELL, MT
59901-3854

*Or
current
resident*

MT STATE LIBRARY
1515 E 6TH AVE
HELENA MT 59620

